

Sunscreens

This briefing focuses on prescribing of sunscreens for Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) approved indications in order to support a review of sunscreens as a medicines optimisation project.

Key recommendations

- Ensure that prescribing of sunscreens is in line with ACBS approved indications and prescriptions are endorsed with 'ACBS'.
- If ACBS prescribing criteria are not met, then review and stop prescribing the sunscreen and advise the patient to purchase an appropriate sunscreen over-the-counter (OTC).
- For optimum photoprotection:
 - » Use sunscreens from spring to autumn in people with photodermatoses.
 - » Apply sunscreens thickly and frequently (approximately two hourly).
- Only prescribe sunscreen preparations that are included in the ACBS list.
- Prescribe sunscreen preparations with highest sun protection factor (SPF) to provide maximum protection (protects against UVB) and a four or five star rating (protects against UVA).
- Review all patients on sunscreens regularly to ensure they still meet the ACBS criteria and are using products correctly:
- Advise any patients who don't meet an ACBS approved indication to purchase an appropriate sunscreen OTC.
- Remind patients that sunscreens are not a substitute for covering the skin and avoiding sunlight.

Sunscreens marked as "ACBS" in the British National Formulary (BNF) are regarded as drugs when prescribed for skin protection against UV radiation in abnormal cutaneous photosensitivity.¹ Prescribing for other indications is not permitted on FP10.

Photosensitivity refers to a wide range of skin conditions associated with an abnormal reaction to UV radiation and can be broadly split into two groups:²

- » Photoaggravated dermatoses: pre-existing skin conditions that can be aggravated or exacerbated by sunlight on exposed areas of skin.
- » Photodermatoses: skin disorders that are caused (rather than aggravated) by exposure to sunlight.

The amount of sunscreen needed for the body of an average adult to achieve the stated SPF is around 35ml or six to eight teaspoons of lotion.³

Clinical evidence

Key to the management of photodermatoses is photoprotection, which includes seeking shade; wearing photoprotective clothing, wide brimmed hats, and sunglasses; and applying sunscreens.

There is a reported lack of compliance among patients suffering from photodermatoses and this may account for the variable effect of sunscreens.⁴ The prescriber must therefore ensure patients are counselled in the appropriate application of sunscreens.

Costs

Table 1: Sunscreens included in the ACBS list and their cost per pack (cost effective products that have a higher sun protection or larger pack size are highlighted in green)⁵




Product	SNOMED Code	Pack size	Cost	No. of packs per 28 days (980ml)	Cost per 28 days
Uvistat Lipscreen SPF 50	11537711 000001105	5g	£2.99	1	£2.99
Uvistat Sun Cream SPF 30	11538211 000001104	125ml	£7.66	8	£61.28
Uvistat Sun Cream SPF 50	11486711 000001109	125ml	£8.68	8	£69.44
Sunsense Ultra Lotion SPF 50+	11489511 000001109	50ml	£5.09	20	£101.80
		125ml	£8.26	8	£66.08
		500ml	£18.43	2	£36.86

Costs and savings

In England and Wales, 34,024 sunscreen items at a cost of £418,168 were prescribed annually (NHSBSA, January to March 2021). 32% of the sunscreens prescribed were for preparations not on the ACBS list. **Reviewing patients and prescribing 50% fewer sunscreens would save around £209,566 in England and Wales annually. This equates to savings of £328 per 100,000 patients.**

References

1. Joint Formulary Committee. *British National Formulary* (online) London: BMJ Group and Pharmaceutical Press. <https://www.medicinescomplete.com/> accessed on 10/06/21.
2. Primary Care Dermatology Society UK. Photodermatoses. <http://www.pcds.org.uk/clinical-guidance/photodermatoses>. Updated April 2020.
3. NICE. Sunlight exposure: risks and benefits. NICE guideline [NG34]. Published February 2016. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng34>.
4. Faurschou A, Wulf HC. European Dermatology Guideline for the photodermatoses. 3. Photoprotection. 2010. https://www.edf.one/dam/jcr:2cfacdd2-5e09-475e-b3b7-42a5f11a1481/Photodermatoses_2010_Photoprotection_GL.pdf
5. NHS Prescription Services. dm+d Browser. Accessed 10/06/21. <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacies-gp-practices-and-appliance-contractors/dictionary-medicines-and-devices-dmd>.

Additional resources available	 Bulletin	https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-289-sunscreens/
	 Tools	
	 Data pack	https://data.prescqipp.info/views/B289_Sunscreens/FrontPage?iid=1&isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&embed=y

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